

# **Delaware Indians language collection S1560**

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August 03, 2015

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Rare Books and Manuscripts  
140 North Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis, Indiana, 46204  
317-232-3671

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Rafinesque, C. S. (Constantine Samuel), 1783-1840
<b>Title</b>	Delaware Indians language collection
<b>Date</b>	circa 1850
<b>Extent</b>	0.01 Cubic feet 1 folder
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Text [Folder]</b>	S1560

### Preferred Citation

Delaware Indians language collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library

## Biographical Note

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Constantine Samuel Rafinesque-Schmaltz was born in Constantinople (now Istanbul), Turkey on August 22, 1783 to a French merchant father and a German mother born in Greece. He spent most of his life traveling from place to place, living in France, Italy, and the United States. Rafinesque made notable contributions in the fields of botany, zoology, and ancient Mesoamerican linguistics. Between 1818 and 1826, he taught as a professor of botany, natural history, and modern languages at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. Rafinesque died of stomach and liver cancer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 18, 1840.

One of Rafinesque's forays into Native American linguistics includes the translation of the "Wallam Olum" (usually translated "Red Record"). According to Rafinesque, he translated the "Wallam Olum"--origin narratives of the Lenape, or Delaware, people--from the tribe's surviving written records in the form of a bundle of wooden tablets or sticks engraved and painted with supposed Lenape symbols. Rafinesque purported he obtained the plaques from a Dr. Ward in 1822, who supposedly received them from a Delaware patient in 1820, and that they describe how the Lenape traveled from Asia to North America via the Bering Strait, overcame a mound-building nation in the Midwest, and trekked eastward before giving rise to the Algonquin tribes. By the time the text was published in his book, *The American Nations*, in 1836, Rafinesque claimed to have lost the tablets. Today, many scholars have concluded the "Wallam Olum" was a hoax, with some debate as to whether Rafinesque was the perpetrator or the victim, while other experts and individuals among the Lenape continue to believe in the document's authenticity.

Sources:

Items in the collection.

Jackson, Brittany and Mark Rose. "Walam Olum Hokum." *Archaeology*, December 4, 2009. Accessed August 3, 2015. [http://archive.archaeology.org/online/features/hoaxes/walam\\_olum.html](http://archive.archaeology.org/online/features/hoaxes/walam_olum.html).

"Constantine Samuel Rafinesque." In *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2nd ed., eds. Suzanne M. Bourgoin and Paula K. Byers. Detroit: Gale Research, 2004.

Rafinesque, C.S. *The American Nations; or, Outlines of Their General History, Ancient and Modern: Including the Whole History of the Earth and Mankind in the Western Hemisphere*. Philadelphia, C.S. Rafinesque, 1836. Accessed August 3, 2015. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008399892>.

World Public Library. "Constantine Samuel Rafinesque-Schmaltz." *World Heritage Encyclopedia*. Accessed August 3, 2015. [http://worldlibrary.org/articles/Constantine\\_Samuel\\_Rafinesque-Schmaltz](http://worldlibrary.org/articles/Constantine_Samuel_Rafinesque-Schmaltz).

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection includes a photostatic copy of a 40-page manuscript transcribing part of Constantine Samuel Rafinesque-Schmaltz's original work on the Lenape, or Delaware, people from 1833, which was first published in his book, *The American Nations; or, Outlines of Their General History, Ancient and Modern: Including the Whole History of the Earth and Mankind in the Western Hemisphere*, in 1836. The text includes, according to Rafinesque, translations of stories of the Delaware from the tribe's surviving written records known as the "Wallam Olum" (Red Record) with pictographs, as well as comments on the work of George Henry Loskiel. The transcription was made circa 1850 by H.C.M. and housed in the New York Public Library manuscripts collection.

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## Arrangement

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The manuscript in this collection is arranged numerically by page number (reverse side).

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Rare Books and Manuscripts

### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

### Conditions Governing Use

Legal title, copyright, and literary rights reside with Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN. All requests to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted to Rare Books and Manuscripts.

### Custodial History

This collection was received by Rare Books and Manuscripts as a donation from Eli Lilly on 1935/02/07.

### Accruals

No further additions are expected.

## **Processing Information**

Collection processing completed 2015/04/02 by Nikki Stoddard Schofield. EAD finding aid created 2015/04/02 by Nikki Stoddard Schofield. EAD finding aid revised 2015/08/03 by Brittany Kropf.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Personal Name(s)**

- Loskiel, George Henry, 1740-1814

### **Subject(s)**

- Delaware Indians
- Indians of North America
- Indians of North America--Languages--Glossaries, vocabularies, etc.
- Wallam olum